

A Message....

From *Manal al-Kasabi*  
to *Manal al-Sharif*

I have watched your speech at the Oslo Freedom Forum, and noticed many errors, false statements, and misrepresentations therein. Since I am also a Saudi woman, I shall respond to some of what you have said below, bearing in mind that I was born in the same year you were born in, and I share not only your age, but also your name.

- Your profile message is a wish for your daughter: *“Because my mother couldn't change my present, I decided 2 change my daughter's future”* As for me, I wish for my daughter a noble, dignified, honourable, loving, and harmonious life, just like the one I have lived and enjoyed, and I certainly do not wish for her the debasement and loss you're running after in the name of “freedom”!
- If you had problems in your environment and surroundings as you were growing up, then please do not speak on behalf of the Women of Saudi Arabia! Know that if you've managed to rally hundreds of women around you, then there are thousands upon thousands of women who have lived a dignified and noble life, far away from your exaggerations.
- The title of this year's forum was (Out of Darkness, Into Light), when it should have been in fact (Out of Darkness, Back Into Darkness)! As for us, we have a Guiding Light and a Clear Truth which we live by, and it suffices us from needing such useless forums. The forum claims to “provide a setting for eye-opening

presentations,” and – unfortunately – your biased presentation only placed a shield on the audience’s eyes.

- We share the same age, and I have lived for twenty years having gone by my family ID card – may God keep our family united – and, despite that, I had my own bank accounts, pursued Post-Graduate studies, got married, and nothing was ever missing from my life, praise be to God.
- If you feel “freedom” abroad and feel “restricted, confined, and shackled” here, then go ahead and live abroad – we shall feel no loss! If it were up to me, I would have revoked your Saudi Citizenship after hearing you express such feelings.
- You left all issues and topics under the sun, and could not relay to the Western audience who is eager to learn something about Saudi Arabia except the “separate entrances for men and women”?! Nevertheless, those entrances – although not found everywhere as you made it seem – are a way of honouring women and preserving their privacy.
- You were moved by the image of a man throwing himself off the tower, yet you were not moved by the sight of the elderly **women** whose houses are being razed and destroyed in Palestine, and the images of children whose bodies are pierced with bullets?
- It is only your ignorance which led you – and perhaps others in our country – to think that a woman’s voice is ‘awrah, and her name is ‘awrah! As for me, my

father has taught me that our Prophet – peace and blessings be upon him – used to call his wife Safiyyah by her name and, in fact, introduced her as such to his male companions; and my mother has certainly taught me that my voice is not ‘awrah. Did you happen to forget that Kind Abd al-Aziz – may God have mercy on Him – went by the nickname “Noorah’s Brother”?

- I did not live your life, despite being born in the same year! My father is very proud of my name, and my husband calls me by it...and my voice is loud and clear in expressing the truth in everything I need, without being ashamed of doing so.
- Many women our age have lived a happy and tranquil life with their families, gotten the best education, travelled to several countries, and made their own decisions in all that pertains to their lives...and have always enjoyed their freedom, without being deprived of it in any way.
- We were born in the same year; however, you lived a marginalized life, whereas I have proudly lived as a *princess* under the guardianship of my parents, and I now live as a *queen* in the care of my husband.

**So, Manal, a question begs itself:**

**Which planet do YOU live on?**

For the above reasons, and many more, you do NOT represent me, and I do NOT allow you to speak on my behalf.

We ask God to guide you to the truth, and we hope that you would take into consideration the views and experiences of the majority of women in Saudi Arabia, and not limit yourself to your personal – and biased – experience.

Peace.

Manal al-Kasabi (@manalkasabi)

Riyadh, KSA

May 16, 2012